

An Overview

Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma is a 501 (c) (3) organization that provides free civil legal assistance to eligible low-income individuals and their families and to the elderly. This service is provided through its 21 law offices that are strategically-located throughout the state so that they can serve clients in every county. These Law Offices are in Ardmore, Bartlesville, Hugo, Lawton, Muskogee, Norman, Oklahoma City, Stillwater, Tulsa and Weatherford. There are smaller satellite offices in Ada, Altus, Chickasha, Duncan, Enid, Jay, McAlester, Poteau, Shawnee, Stilwell, and Woodward. The administrative office is in Oklahoma City.

The work of Legal Aid is civil in nature. Legal Aid may not assist with any criminal problems or provide any representation to those who are incarcerated. Legal Aid is prohibited from entering class action law suits as well as from taking any fee generating cases. Legal Aid typically passes those cases to the private bar when clients seek our help. Even if individuals qualify for service, because the demand far exceeds the capacity of staff, most cases must meet a condition of immediate severity.

In 2009 Legal Aid has a total staff of 137 including 72 attorneys, 14 paralegals and 51 clerical and administrative support staff. To help handle the demand, **hundreds of private Oklahoma attorneys** volunteer their time and expertise to Legal Aid. Sometimes they teach in our legal clinics, but most often they advise clients and help them fill out legal forms, or they take on simple cases for full representation. In 2008, 230 private attorneys handled at least one Legal Aid case.

Another tool for handling the demand for free civil legal help is the John Athens Hotline in the Tulsa office in which part-time attorneys screen the clients and help those whose situations can be easily resolved over the phone. To be eligible for legal assistance a client must be living at or below **200% of the federal poverty guidelines**.

In 2008 the Legal Aid legal staff and pro bono attorneys **closed 20,212** statewide – cases that touched the lives of **15,324 children**. The biggest demand for the services of Legal Aid is for family law, including cases involving domestic violence. Children are the biggest benefactors as Legal Aid strives to stabilize their families through the issues of custody, child support, and divorce. Legal Aid also represents the elderly seeking social security or other public benefits or in helping the elderly resolve the issues of guardianship. We help individuals faced with losing their housing through evictions or mortgage foreclosures. We assist people with cases involving Medicare, Medicaid, and other health care problems, helping them gain the entitlements for which they qualify.

As a non-profit law firm, Legal Aid depends entirely for its support upon grants, contracts, and donations. Legal Aid is a member agency of the following 15 United Ways and Community Funds: Ada, Grady County (Chickasha), Enid, Lawton, Muskogee, Norman, Oklahoma City, Pottawatomie, South Central Oklahoma (Ardmore), Southeastern Oklahoma (McAlester, Durant, Idabel), Stephens County (Duncan), Stillwater, Texas County (Guymon), Tulsa Area, and Woodward.

The make-up of our twenty-seven member governing board is determined by the Legal Services Corporation, our primary grantor, and must be comprised of two-thirds attorney representatives from bar associations and other legal associations and one-third representing Legal Aid clients.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

March 2, 2009

1. Why does Legal Aid continue to raise money? Doesn't it get government monies?

Answer: Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma is a 501(c)(3) organization that will always rely on the generosity of the legal community as well as the business and foundation communities. Legal Aid receives funding from the following government entities:

- Legal Services Corporation - a national pass-through agency for Congressional funds supporting the largest portion—about 50%—of Legal Aid's budget. This funding has remained flat for over a decade.
- State of Oklahoma – over \$1 million to support family law work and the second largest funding source for Legal Aid.
- Title III Older American grants - to help with the legal problems of senior citizens.
- HUD monies – supporting legal work for Tulsa County homeless individuals.

2. Does Legal Aid receive United Way funding?

Answer: Legal Aid receives funding from 14 United Way organizations, which constitutes about 5 percent of Legal Aid's \$8.4 million budget. The United Ways and community funds are in Ada, Grady County (Chickasha), Enid, Lawton, Muskogee, Norman, Oklahoma City, Pottawatomie, South Central Oklahoma (Ardmore), Southeastern Oklahoma (McAlester, Durant, Idabel), Stephens County (Duncan), Stillwater, Tulsa and Woodward.

3. Why does Legal Aid raise private funds?

Answer: The 2009 Campaign for Justice is a one-year effort to raise funds to increase the breadth of services—to provide increased services to more people—provided by Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma. The campaign goal is \$600,000; the co-chairs of the campaign are Brad and Kim Henry. Prominent private attorneys from Oklahoma City and Tulsa volunteer their time for the campaign.

4. Can I make a pledge and pay it off during the year? Can I make a multi-year pledge? Do you accept credit cards?

Answer: Yes, you can give any way you'd like. The Campaign return envelope or pledge form will have space to indicate how you wish to pay your gift. Just let us know when you want a reminder or invoice. Legal Aid accepts Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express and Diners Club.

5. Does Legal Aid take cases from the private attorneys who struggle to support their practices?

Answer: The income eligibility guidelines for Legal Aid clients are so low that they would never be able to afford a private attorney. Furthermore, private attorneys need to make a living from their practices and they know a poverty law practice will not be financially-rewarding. Furthermore,

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

private attorneys usually are not well-versed in the areas of law in which poor and elderly people need help.

6. Why can't the cause of justice be served by private attorneys taking *pro bono* cases? Why do we need to pay Legal Aid attorneys?

Answer: Many attorneys recognize an ethical obligation to provide legal help to the poor. Last year over 600 Legal Aid cases were handled by private Oklahoma attorneys, with some attorneys taking several cases during the year. However, the need for legal services far exceeds the current capacity of *pro bono* attorneys and Legal Aid. A three-month study in 2005 revealed that for every case Legal Aid accepted for assistance or representation, an equal number of cases were turned away due to lack of resources. There were just not enough Legal Aid attorneys, staff or *pro bono*. This is a critical gap in our justice system.

William G. Paul, who successfully led the three-year Campaign for Legal Aid and who served as president of the American Bar Association in 2000, tells attorneys across the country that the most cost-effective method of providing legal services is through a fulltime Legal Aid program, staffed by attorneys who are trained in the areas of poverty law that so often burden low-income people. This model provides clients with the best counsel while freeing the private attorneys to practice law in their own areas of expertise.

7. What kind of cases does Legal Aid accept? Does it defend criminals or get involved in class action lawsuits?

Answer: Except for a contract with the city of Oklahoma City to provide municipal court defender services, Legal Aid may not assist with any criminal defense issues or representation of those who are incarcerated. Legal Aid attorneys in Oklahoma are prohibited from entering into any class action lawsuits. Because the demand far exceeds the capacity of staff attorneys to handle, even if the people or families qualify, those that are accepted generally meet a condition of immediate severity. Legal Aid attorneys have represented thousands of families who need legal help to escape domestic violence, protect their children, avoid homelessness, redress consumer fraud, overcome barriers to employment, and/or obtain medical care.

8. What are Legal Aid's priorities in the service it provides?

Answer: The priorities of Legal Aid attorneys are to first ensure the safety of their clients and then to work to secure food, housing, and a source of income. This work includes helping victims secure protection from domestic violence, helping individuals and families make the transition from welfare to work, handling cases that gain access to necessary health care services, helping individuals secure social security income and other benefits for which they legally qualify, insuring that poor families are able to maintain or secure safe and affordable housing and shelter, assisting individuals to gain access to education and training, and providing legal assistance on consumer and employment-related matters. **In 2008 Legal Aid closed 20,212 cases and changed the lives of more than 35,187 including 15,324 Oklahoma children.**



LEGAL AID SERVICES 
OF OKLAHOMA, INC.

Thank you for your interest in the 2009 Campaign for Justice. The Campaign provides funding for Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, described in the following pages. Legal Aid is Oklahoma's only statewide not-for-profit law firm focusing on the critical civil legal issues facing elderly and low-income Oklahomans. Legal Aid serves clients from every county through a network of 21 professionally-staffed offices across the state. The primary legal areas of law work involve family, housing, health care and income maintenance problems. Oftentimes, a client has reached a critical crossroads and is about to become homeless, without food or facing disease, or on the verge of unnecessary separation from loved ones. Legal Aid has a history of achieving successful outcomes for these clients, helping to provide safety and security for their families. Legal Aid's work is efficient. From the time Legal Aid accepts a case until a solution is reached for the client and the case is closed, the average cost is \$386 per case. Despite Legal Aid's no-frills approach to the practice of poverty law, there remain more than twice as many eligible clients as Legal Aid can serve with current resources. Since 2003, Oklahoma's legal community has taken an active role in supporting Legal Aid through the Campaign for Justice because Legal Aid is a great investment for Oklahoma.

LEGAL AID CASE STORIES

Sharon Parker

Age: 25 years
Occupation: Retail clerk
Family Status: Separated
Children: Danny, 1 ½ years
Legal Need: Protective order, divorce,
and child support



The constant verbal abuse suddenly turned physical when Sharon's husband shoved her against the wall and slapped her. After a year of abuse and threats of abuse, she began to fear for her life and for her son, Danny. The local domestic violence shelter finally called Legal Aid who first worked to insure Sharon's and Danny's safety. Within a day she had a protective order to keep her husband from hurting her, and she and the Legal Aid attorney began to talk about a divorce and how she would support herself and her son.

LEGAL AID SERVICES
OF OKLAHOMA, INC. 
Making Equal Justice for All a Reality

Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, Inc. (LASO) is a statewide, 501 (c) (3) organization providing free civil legal assistance to eligible low income individuals and their families and to the elderly. This service is provided through its 21 offices that are strategically-located throughout the state, serving all 77 counties. In 2008 the LASO legal staff and their cadre of volunteer attorneys closed 20,212 cases statewide, most of which protected the basic human needs of safety, home and shelter, food and medicine for the family and preservation of income.

Geneva Johnson

Age: 80 years
Occupation: Retired
Family Status: Widow
Children: Grown daughter
Legal Need: Credit card debt

A credit card company obtained a default judgment against Hannah when she couldn't pay its bill after her husband died. Legal Aid kept the creditor from taking her money by filing motions to claim lawful exemptions for the widow's income from garnishment and to stop further garnishments, thus giving her time to settle her financial affairs. The bank released the hold on Hannah's money and her months of worry were over.



The priorities of Legal Aid are to first ensure the safety of clients and then to work to secure food, housing, and a source of income for them. This work includes helping victims secure protection from domestic violence, helping individuals make the transition from welfare to work, handling cases that gain access to necessary health care services, helping individuals secure social security income and other benefits for which they legally qualify, ensuring that poor families are able to maintain or secure safe and affordable housing and shelter, assisting individuals to gain access to education and training, and providing legal assistance on consumer and employment-related matters.

LASO does not assist with any criminal defense issues or representation of those who are incarcerated, with the exception of a contract with the City of Oklahoma City to provide municipal court defender services. Legal Aid is prohibited from entering any class action law suits or any fee-generating cases and typically refers them to the private bar when those clients seek our help. Because the demand far exceeds available resources, most cases meet the condition of immediate severity.



Jim Hamilton

Age: 45 years

Occupation: Disability

Family Status: Single

Legal Need: Eviction

Jim has been using a wheelchair since his auto accident ten years ago. He's been living in an apartment that accommodates his disability for the last four years. When his landlord told him

he had sold the building and he had two weeks to move, Jim called Legal Aid. Jim's housing attorney discovered he had a lease with one more year remaining and promptly wrote a letter to the new landlord explaining that Jim would abide by the lease. Within a week, Jim was notified that the earlier eviction notice was in error and that he could stay.

Harold and Gladys Harvey

Ages: 58 and "not-telling"

Occupation: Electrician and homemaker

Family Status: Married 37 years

Children: One daughter, age 25

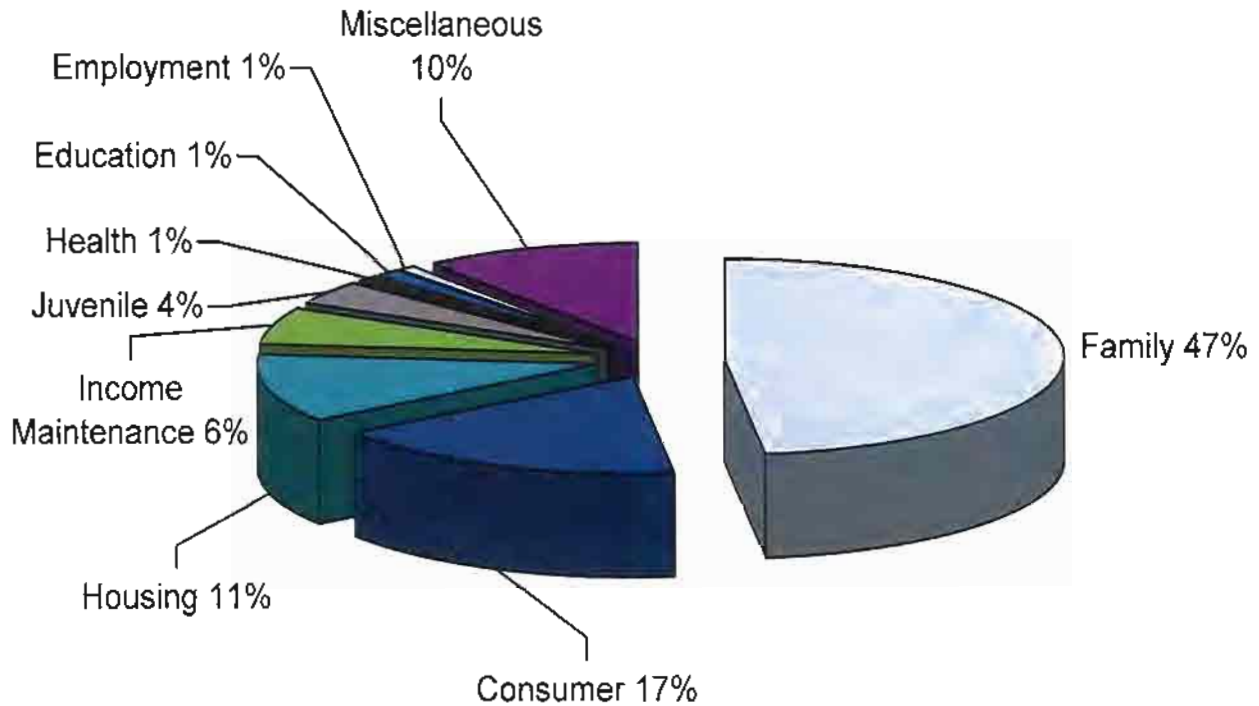
Legal Need: Guardianship of grandsons



When their daughter, Marcia, was sentenced to prison for selling drugs, the Harveys knew their home would be the best place for her two boys. A state official recommended Legal Aid Services and its Senior Law division. The Legal Aid attorney first attempted to acquire a Durable Power of Attorney, but the boys' father, who also had drug-related convictions, would not agree. Legal Aid then filed a guardianship action with the court, and the Harveys were named legal guardians of their grandsons.

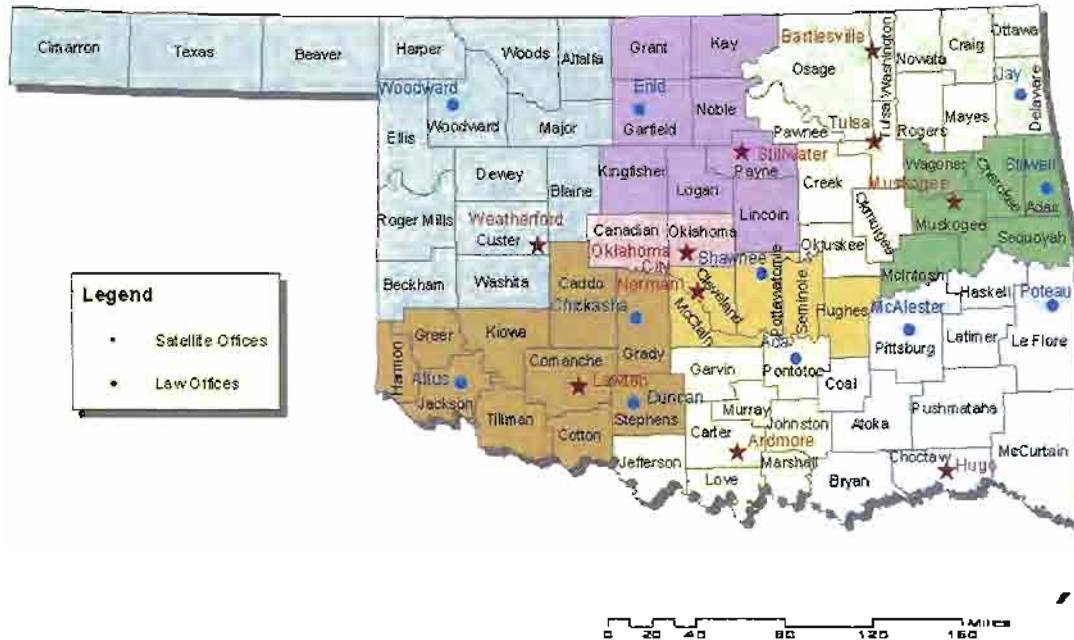
TYPES OF CASES

Issues of family law comprise over 47% of the cases Legal Aid closed in 2008. Consumer protection was the next largest category at a little over 17% and housing followed at 11%. Other Legal Aid cases include issues of income maintenance, employment and health benefits.



In 2008 Legal Aid staff closed 20,212 cases that directly benefited 35,187 low-income men, women, and children. Children are profoundly affected by the work of Legal Aid whose attorneys work to remove violence from their homes, help their mothers receive child support and work to resolve issues of eviction, shelter, and bankruptcy. Twenty-three per cent of Oklahoma's children fall within the federal low-income guidelines, and by helping their mothers, fathers, or other caretakers, Legal Aid improves their lives. In 2008 LASO helped the parents of 15,324 Oklahoma children and stabilized the families.

STATEWIDE NETWORK OF OFFICES



LASO's total staff of 137 currently includes 72 attorneys, 14 paralegals, and 51 support personnel and administrative staff. Through its law offices, strategically placed throughout the state, each serving multiple counties, Legal Aid serves the civil legal needs of the poor in all 77 Oklahoma counties. These law offices are in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, as well as Ardmore, Bartlesville, Hugo, Lawton, Muskogee, Norman, Stillwater and Weatherford. In addition, there are staffed satellite offices in Ada, Altus, Chickasha, Enid, Jay, McAlester, Poteau, Shawnee, Stilwell, and Woodward and a circuit-riding office in Duncan. The administrative offices are in Oklahoma City.

Hundreds of private Oklahoma attorneys volunteer their time and expertise to Legal Aid. Sometimes they teach in our legal clinics, but most often they advise clients and help them fill out legal forms, or they take on simple cases for full representation. In 2008 230 private attorneys handled at least one Legal Aid case.

SPECIAL LEGAL AID PROGRAMS

The John Athens Intake Hotline (Tulsa): serves as the point of entry for thousands of persons seeking Legal Aid's help, both in and outside of Tulsa County.

HIV/AIDS Legal Resource Project (Statewide): provides legal services to low-income people living with HIV/AIDS through *pro bono* private attorneys.

Farmworker Law and Hispanic Outreach Project (Statewide): focuses on permanent legal resident farm workers who face legal problems involving their basic rights or violations of labor laws.

Courthouse Clinics (Oklahoma City): Legal Aid attorneys are at the Oklahoma County courthouse four days a week to assist victims of domestic violence and offer advice to persons who are about to lose their subsidized housing vouchers.

Homeless Legal Assistance Project (Tulsa and Oklahoma City): works to remove legal barriers that keep or cause an individual or family to be homeless.

Medical Legal Children's Project (Tulsa): In conjunction with the University of Oklahoma, Legal Aid works through the family medical clinic at UTEP, providing clients with another point of entry for legal services.

OKLaw.org: provides legal information for those clients who have access to a computer and the internet.

Probono.net/ok Advocate Resource Center: provides an on-line resource for attorneys who work to meet the civil legal needs of low-income Oklahomans.



LEGAL AID
SERVICES OF
OKLAHOMA, INC.



Making Equal Justice for All a Reality

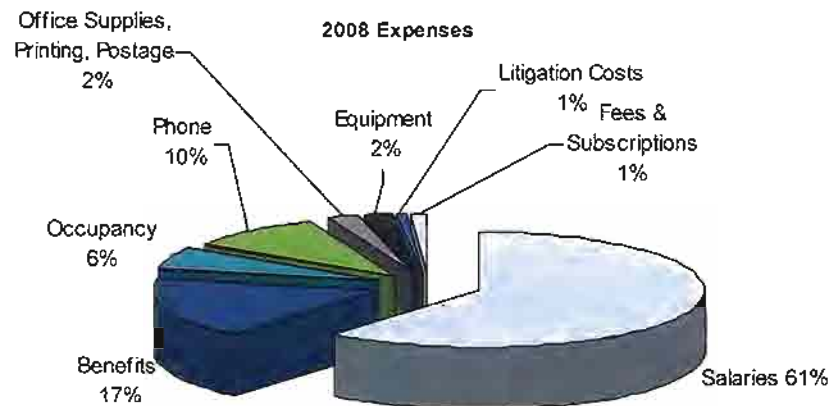
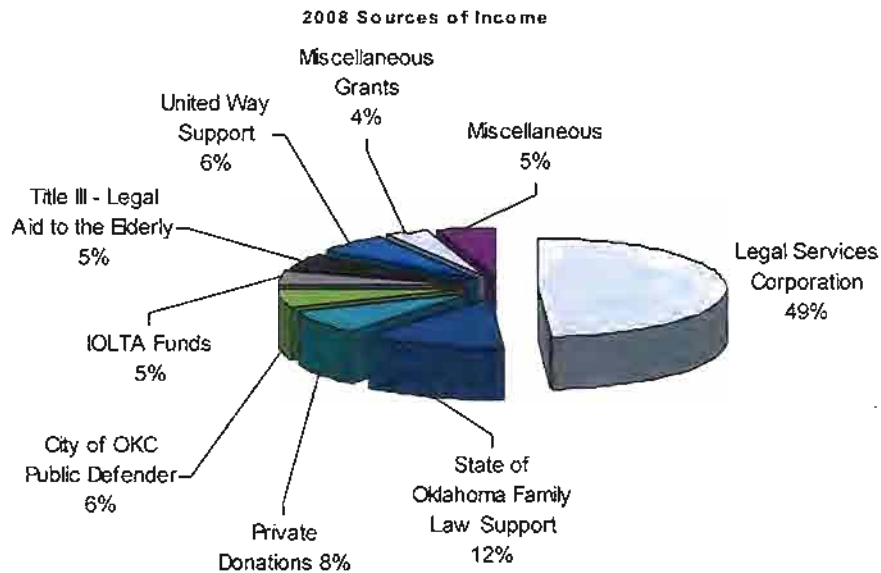


2008 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

(UNAUDITED)

Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma is supported by 14 United Ways, which are: Ada, Enid and Northwest Oklahoma, Grady County (Chickasha), Lawton, Muskogee, Norman, Oklahoma City, Pottowatomic County, South Central Oklahoma (Ardmore), Southeastern Oklahoma (McAlester), Stephens County (Duncan), Stillwater, Tulsa Area, and Woodward.

LASO projected an operating budget of \$8.84 million for 2008. Shown below are the financials for 2008.



FUNDING CHALLENGES

For the past decade Legal Aid has faced a financial crisis of critical importance.

- 1) Funding from the Legal Services Corporation has been trimmed back on an almost annual basis since 1994 while there are more eligible Oklahomans needing our services than ever before.
- 2) The impact of the national and international economic crises is finally being felt in Oklahoma. The 2009 Legislature is facing a \$900 million shortfall and expects to cut back on all spending including funding to the Legal Services Revolving Fund to combat domestic violence.
- 3) Government programs to fight poverty and offer a hand-up to low-income people have struggled for the past decade. The Obama Administration supports Legal Aid, but dollars are sparse due to two ongoing wars overseas and a recession at home.
- 4) The investment economy is affecting many foundations' grants to Legal Aid including the Oklahoma Bar Foundation's IOLTA grant program; and
- 5) Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma is the only statewide civil legal services program available to 675,000 low-income and elderly Oklahomans. The need for Legal Aid is greater than ever as more people become unemployed or are among the working poor.

Legal Aid has taken steps to secure support for its mission - first, through the Campaign for Justice (support from individual attorneys, firms, businesses and foundations) and second, through additional funding from the Oklahoma Legislature whenever possible.



2009 CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE

\$600,000 GOAL

"The most cost effective way to meet the need of providing free civil legal help to the poor is through a full-time professional Legal Aid program.

—William G. Paul
2005 Oklahoma Justice Award Recipient

LEGAL AID SERVICES OF OKLAHOMA, INC.

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Legal Aid - A Great Investment

1. **Legal Aid provides critical and cost-effective services that improve lives.** For example, securing a protective order can save women and children from severe physical and emotional harm; gaining access to needed health care at a critical time often prevents more serious and expensive problems later on; helping an individual make the welfare to work transition helps guarantee a sound economic future; and preventing an eviction or foreclosure through early legal intervention can avoid the much more expensive societal costs of homelessness later. Legal Aid's services are a great investment for Oklahoma. From the time Legal Aid accepts a case until a solution is reached for the client and the case is closed, the **average cost is \$386 per case**. In addition to working with clients daily in Legal Aid's 21 offices throughout Oklahoma, Legal Aid's annual calendar includes many hundreds of community education events and several OBA-certified CLEs, publication of newsletters and brochures which are disbursed to supporters and requestors. A state-of-the-art website provides current information to Oklahomans who are seeking program information. Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma is a cost-efficient program and the only statewide program offering free civil legal services to low-income persons. A donation to the Campaign for Legal Aid is a charitable contribution, a great investment, which makes Oklahoma a better place to live.

2. **Legal Aid provides access to the justice system for poor people**, who do not have the same access as the general population because there are far too few lawyers to meet their legal needs. According to the 2000 U.S. census, 20% of the state's population, nearly 675,000 persons, live at or below 125% of the Federal poverty line. More than 200,000 Oklahoma children live in poor households. These households need access to our justice system in order to collect child support for their children, to obtain orders of protection when there is domestic violence, to help them obtain medical insurance for their families, to make sure their disabled children receive critical services, to protect their homes and savings.

To help all these families in our community, Legal Aid has the full-time equivalency of 74 lawyers - just one attorney for every 9,122 low-income Oklahomans. In the general population, however, there is one attorney for every 300 or so persons. A recent three month study showed that for every person helped by LASO, one person was turned away due to lack of resources. These numbers reflect a critical justice gap.

4. **Legal Aid helps our judicial system function more efficiently** by providing expert legal advice and representation to families and individuals who might otherwise attempt to resolve their legal problems without the benefit of counsel or outside the civil justice system.

5. **Legal Aid provides the stitching that holds the safety net together:** While protective orders are available to victims of domestic violence, without an attorney they are often beyond the reach of many poor women and children; in order to secure child support and custody, an attorney is essential. While public and private insurance programs cover the costs of children's health care, these benefits are often denied and families need an attorney to secure needed medical help. And, when individuals are making the transition from welfare to work they often need an attorney to help with legal problems such as eligibility for child care or health insurance to ensure that they are successful.